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## 19 U.S. STATES SUE TRUMP OVER $1,00,000 FEE ON NEW H-1B VISA

**The Democrat-ruled states warned that the policy will worsen labour shortages in key sectors such as health care, education and technology**

### PETITIONERS SAY FEE HIKE AGAINST LAW

The attorneys general argued that the new fee breaches both the Administrative Procedure Act and the Immigration and Nationality Act, as it was introduced without congressional approval or the required rule-making process. "The administration thinks it can raise costs on a whim, but the law says otherwise," said the California attorney general | P11

### COALITION LED BY NEW YORK ATTORNEY GENERAL

- New York Attorney General Letitia James (L) led 18 other attorneys general in filing the lawsuit. In September, President Donald Trump announced a one-time $1,00,000 fee on all new H-1B petitions
- Many states depend on H-1B visa to fill essential roles. For instance, about a third of health care workers in New York are H-1B visa holders

**$2K-5k**

**IS HOW MUCH IT COST TO FILE AN H-1B APPLICATION BEFORE THE FEE HIKE**

CHENNAI ▪ MADURAI ▪ VIJAYAWADA ▪ BENGALURU ▪ KOCHI ▪ HYDERABAD ▪ VISAKHAPATNAM ▪ COIMBATORE ▪ KOZHIKODE ▪ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM ▪ BELAGAVI ▪ BHUBANESWAR ▪ SHIVAMOGGA ▪ MANGALURU ▪ TIRUPATI ▪ TIRUCHY ▪ TIRUNELVELI ▪ SAMBALPUR ▪ HUBBALLI ▪ DHARMAPURI ▪ KOTTAYAM ▪ KANNUR ▪ VILLUPURAM ▪ KOLLAM ▪ TADEPALLIGUDEM ▪ NAGAPATTINAM ▪ THRISSUR ▪ KALABURAGI

LEFT: Fans turned violent after Leo Messi suddenly left the Salt Lake Stadium due to security reasons; and (R) Telangana CM Revanth Reddy, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi with Messi in Hyderabad | PTI/VINAY MADAPPU

# MESS IN BENGAL, GRACE IN HYD

## No glimpse of star leads to paying public rage

**ASHUTOSH ACHARYA** @ Kolkata

ALL for a glimpse of Messi. For a Messi fan, it's all that matters. As soon as I reached the gates of the Salt Lake Stadium at 8.30 am, fatigue from overnight journey just disappeared. The stadium was draped in Argentina colours, with people in jerseys with Messi written on their backs. There were giant cutouts and paintings of him as well. Fans from across the country were there. My ticket allowed me to one part of the stands.

More than 60,000 fans would have gathered inside by 10.30 am. There was a cultural programme highlighting India and Argentina, followed by a friendly football match between Diamond Harbour Club and Mohun Bagan. Fans were kept engaged, but as soon as the announcer hollered in stadium PA system that Messi would be entering, at around 11.30 am, excitement quickly turned into a frenzy. Fans began climbing the barriers placed in front of the stands to catch a glimpse of the World Cup winner.

As Messi entered the stadium in a car, accompanied by his Inter Miami teammates Rodrigo de Paul and Luis Suárez, things started getting out of hand. Fans were delirious.

However, the scenes turned chaotic after guests in the cordoned-off VVIP area crowded around Messi, blocking his view. The event organiser was heard repeatedly urging them to step aside. All of a sudden the situation went out of control and Messi and his entourage were escorted out of the stadium. We in the crowd did not know what was happening. Word spread that Messi had left. This sparked anger. Bottles were hurled onto the field, banners were violently torn down, and the situation deteriorated. Fans began breaking chairs and throwing them in the stadium. Several people breached barricades and entered the ground. Makeshift tents were overturned, chairs smashed.Even the goalpost was damaged.

Eventually, exhausted and disillusioned, fans began leaving the stadium. Shah Rukh Khan and Sourav Ganguly who were part of the event cancelled their appearances. P13

> I am deeply disturbed & shocked by the mismanagement today. I apologise to Messi, as well as to all sports lovers & fans
>
> Mamata Banerjee

70-foot Leo Messi statue was unveiled by the legend | SRI LOGANATHAN VELMURUGAN

### Bengal CM orders high level probe

Stating that she was shocked and deeply disturbed by "mismanagement" at the Leo Messi's event, CM Mamata Banerjee announced the constitution of a high-level panel to probe incident. "I am consti-tuting an enquiry panel under the chairmanship of Justice (Rtd) Ashim Kumar"

### Rahul joins the fun

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi joined Messi and Reddy at the felicitation towards the end of the event, posing for photos in front of the sponsorship hoardings. Earlier, Messi took a tour of the stadium. He will reach Mumbai on Sunday for his third leg of the GOAT Tour 2025

## Atmosphere electric as city salutes soccer royalty

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE** @ Hyderabad

HYDERABAD put its best foot forward on Saturday by ensuring that the visit of Lionel Messi to India was a resounding success. While the football was limited to an exhibition match between Team Revanth Reddy Singareni and Aparna All Stars, playing for Messi, the atmosphere was electric at the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium, Uppal.

The stadium and its vicinity turned into a roaring cauldron of song, colour and belief on a night Hyderabad came to salute football royalty. First, Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy stepped onto the pitch with his team, drawing loud cheers.

A while later, Messi appeared, first watching quietly from the sidelines, smiling at the noise he had summoned without touching the ball. When he finally walked onto the field, the stadium erupted. Phones went up, voices cracked, and the stadium shook. Messi waved, took in the scene, and soon offered flashes of the touch that has defined a generation. He was joined by Luis Suárez and Rodrigo De Paul, with Revanth alongside them, a tableau that blurred lines between sport, spectacle and dream. For the record, Revanth found the net once and Messi twice.

After the exhibition game ended, Messi made a slow lap of the ground, turning the moment into something personal. A gentle kick sent the ball sailing into the stands, triggering a scramble of joy. At the football clinics, young players shared the pitch with the legend, exchanging crisp *tiki-taka* passes. The loudest applause came when a child joined Messi on the grass, the two sharing a brief, unguarded moment that drew smiles across the stadium.

> It's been great to be part of the tour. I am very happy to be in Hyderabad in the midst of the love and affection shown by you all
>
> Lionel Messi

Addressing the crowd in Spanish, Messi kept it simple. "I feel very happy and grateful to see so many people, and I am very happy to be in Hyderabad," he said. Suárez and Guido Rodríguez echoed the sentiment, speaking of their delight at being part of The GOAT India Tour. The evening closed with a brief felicitation on the field by Revanth and Congress MP Rahul Gandhi.

## Resolution in US House against 50% tariff on India

**JAYANTH JACOB** @ New Delhi

THREE Democratic lawmakers in the US House of Representatives have introduced a resolution seeking to terminate tariffs of up to 50% imposed by President Donald Trump on imports from India, calling the measures illegal and harmful to the US economy and bilateral relations.

Representatives Deborah Ross, Marc Veasey and Raja Krishnamoorthi tabled the resolution on Friday. If at all the resolution is adopted, it would end the national emergency declared on August 6, 2025, under which the tariffs were imposed, and roll back the additional duties levied on Indian goods.

The tariffs were invoked under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act. They began with a 25% levy in August and were later supplemented with "secondary" duties, pushing effective rates to as high as 50% on several categories of Indian imports.

The lawmakers said the tariffs have disrupted supply chains and increased costs for American consumers and businesses, while undermining long-term US-India relations.

Krishnamoorthi, an Indian-American lawmaker, said the tariff strategy was counterproductive and failed to advance US economic or security interests. He argued ending the duties would help strengthen cooperation between Washington and New Delhi.

## Shivakumar will become CM on Jan 6: Congress MLA

**DEVARAJ B HIREHALLI** @ Bengaluru

KARNATAKA Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar's aide and Congress MLA from Ramanagara Iqbal Hussain on Saturday said that Shivakumar will become the state's chief minister on January 6, 2026.

Replying, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said in Lakshmeshwar, "I will only listen to what the high command says."

A visibly embarrassed Shivakumar, who is also KPCC president, told reporters at Devanahalli, "I don't believe what Iqbal has said. He has a habit of making statements like these. Action should be taken against him." Hussain was earlier served a show-cause notice by the party for issuing a similar statement favouring Shivakumar as CM.

Hussain's statement came on the eve of Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar's visit to New Delhi to take part in the vote chori rally on Sunday along with high command leaders. P4

## I went to jail, don't warn me: DKS threatens BAF treasurer over Apt. Bill

**MOHAMMED YACOOB** @Bengaluru

KARNATAKA Deputy CM and Bengaluru Development Minister DK Shivakumar kicked up a controversy after he warned a Bengaluru Apartment Federation (BAF) representative over the delay in modification and implementation of the Karnataka Apartment (Ownership and Management) Bill. Shivakumar's statements came at a meeting with representatives of the Bengaluru Apartment Federation and other associations at Vidhana Soudha.

"One Mr Kiran Hebbar (treasurer of BAF) has written a threatening letter, saying apartment owners could influence the GBA (Greater Bengaluru Authority) elections if the government doesn't listen to them. We are not scared of threats. One must have basic common sense. Who are they talking to? We are here for you and that is why we are calling you here and seeking your feedback," he said. "Let me tell you,

DK Shivakumar at an event in Bengaluru on Saturday | SHASHIDHAR BYRAPPA

I did not fear PM and home minister , and went to jail. You think I will be scared of some Hebbar. You can't warn this government," he threatened.

As his statement flooded social media, Mohandas Pai, former Infosys CFO, was quick to condemn his statement. He said, "Minister @DKShivakumar, this is very wrong. Yes, you are our Minister, but you are our representative, not our Master. We are a democracy and have a right to question Ministers. Very wrong to talk to citizens like this and create Fear. Citizens are suffering and need help. Good for you to help." P6

EXPRESS READ

### DKS: SIT chargesheet in Aland case full of truth

BENGALURU: DCM DK Shivakumar said everything SIT has said in its chargesheet in the Aland "vote theft" case was true. Chargesheet has been reportedly filed against seven persons, including former MLA Subhash Guttedar and his son Harshanand Guttedar | P6

### Ex-MLA Dr Nimbalkar saves life mid-air

BELAGAVI: Former Congress MLA Dr Anjali Nimbalkar saved the life of a co-passenger aboard a Goa–New Delhi flight. Shortly after take-off, a woman complained of chest pain and a weak pulse. Dr Nimbalkar stayed by her side throughout the journey ensuring her welfare | P7

### RBI: Rural women better employed than urban

BENGALURU: Karnataka's rural women are better employed in comparison to their counterparts in urban areas, said an RBI report. Unemployment rate of women in rural areas was 9 per 1,000 in 2023–24 and 13 in 2022–23. In urban areas, unemployment rate of women during 2023–24 was 44 and during 2022–23, it was 51 | P5

UDF workers celebrating the bloc's victory in Kochi | TP SOORAJ

## Strong UDF show, BJP takes T'puram

**ANIL S** @ T'puram

KERALA LOCAL POLLS

LOCAL body polls often signal the changing course of Kerala politics. On Saturday, political Kerala witnessed one of the biggest comebacks of recent times, with the Congress-led UDF scripting an authoritative victory in the two-phase local body elections held on December 9 and 11, and the ruling LDF nearly washed out.

Riding on an anti-incumbency wave, the UDF garnered a stupendous victory, winning four out of six municipal corporations, seven district panchayats, 54 municipalities, 79 block panchayats and 505 grama panchayats. The LDF lost four sitting municipal corporations, as many district panchayats, more than 100 GPs, half of the block panchayats and around 20 municipalities. The writing on the wall is clear: despite all its inherent weaknesses, the Congress front appears to be on a comeback path.

However, the biggest takeaway is the BJP front clinching the Thiruvanathapuram city corporation—a win that has the potential to fuel the party's growth in Kerala. The BJP-led NDA wrested the civic body from the LDF, winning 50 of 100 wards. The NDA has managed to proved itself a formidable contender to both fronts, with its comprehensive win in a municipal corporation, a first for it in the state.

In an election that was supposed to be a referendum on a decade of CPM-led rule under Pinarayi Vijayan, the LDF was banking mainly on the recent hike in social welfare pensions, while its cyber team focused on the Mankootathil issue. The voters, however, were in no mood to take the bait.

On the other hand, the UDF and the NDA based their campaign on the Sabarimala gold theft, which seems to have made an impact on the faithful as well as the discerning public.

BORROWED INTELLIGENCE

## *AI changing creative landscape of Sandalwood*

**ASHWINI M SRIPAD** @ Bengaluru

MUSIC is an integral part of cinema, so it is for Kannada cinema too. Many movies owe their success to songs, which are a creative collaboration of lyricists, composers and singers.

But now, AI is re-writing that familiar song.

"AI is being used to write lyrics, especially in low-budget movies. Once you get the lyrics, it gives thousands of tunes to render it. It even asks whether you want male or female singers. When you push the button, the song is ready with an AI-based singer belting out an AI-based song of AI-composed music from AI-powered lyrics," said well-known music composer, actor and film director V Manohar.

"If this continues, singers and musicians will have less or no work in the coming days. But it may not succeed either. A few years ago, dubbing was allowed and people could watch movies in any language they preferred. But not many took to it as they wanted to watch a movie in the original," he said.

CONTINUED ON: P7